

Go Slow in Extremadura

Naturetrek Tour Report

14th – 21st May 2025



Black Kite



Hoopoe



Cinereous Vulture



Griffon Vulture

Tour report by Keith Hamilton
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Tour participants: Keith Hamilton & Dominic Couzens (leaders) with ten Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Wednesday 14th May

Transfer day from Seville to Almoharín

After a flight delay and another created by the car hire company, we finally made the journey north to Almoharín about an hour later than we had anticipated. We enjoyed a pleasant, uneventful journey through some fabulous Andalusian/Extremaduran countryside, including a mid-way break. We arrived at Finca Flores Amarillas at around 9.30pm, and were greeted by Iva and Paul, our hosts for the week. Unpacked and surprisingly peckish, we tucked into a lovely home-cooked supper, before retiring to bed in anticipation of the events of the coming week.

Day 2

Thursday 15th May

Campo Lugar & Madrigalejo

Leaving our accommodation just before 9.00am after our 8.00am breakfast, we headed towards Campo Lugar, but not before a stop at the bridge over the River Burdalo to pick up some bread. It is always nice to visit this spot, where we could see Red-rumped Swallow, Nightingale, Common Waxbill, and a lovely singing Melodious Warbler. A real surprise was some Waxbills in the supermarket car park.

On arrival at Campo Lugar, almost the first birds that we saw were around twelve Black-bellied Sandgrouse. Then, along the track, a Quail could be heard calling as four Eurasian Spoonbills flew over. We got some fabulous close-up views of some Hoopoes, as Calandra and Greater Short-toed Larks sang overhead. The morning was passing us by, so we headed to Madrigalejo for a well-deserved coffee, after which we went to look for Black-winged Kites.

Iberian Grey Shrike was showing well, but it was looking doubtful for the kite, until we spotted one perched on a pylon. This was great news, and we all got good views. As so often, we were so busy with the birding that we were getting past picnic time, which we prepared in the surroundings of a fabulous purpose-made picnic area.

Picnic over, we headed back along a side road, where we got to see Collared Pratincole and some cracking Iberian Yellow Wagtails. After the tiring travel day yesterday, we returned to Finca Las Amarillas to enjoy the surroundings of the hotel, before supper and the daily run-down of events, and bed.

Day 3

Friday 16th May

Arrocampo & Trujillo

Having woken up to a wonderful clear blue sky today, we headed first to the wetland that is the Embalse de Arrocampo. So, after a hearty breakfast, we hit the road north on the A5/E90. Passing Trujillo on the way, we could see snow still on the tops of the magnificent Sierra de Gredos as we dropped down from the Puerto de Miravete towards Arrocampo. As we passed the Tajo bridge, four Alpine Swifts flew alongside for a couple of moments.

On arrival and after a comfort break, we scanned the reedbed, and soon we saw a lovely Little Bittern fly by, followed by a Squacco Heron. A Savi's Warbler was giving its monotonous reeling song, and one eventually perched up on a reed for everyone to get a good view. Both Great and Common Reed Warblers were singing, and we were lucky to see the former well. Down by the next hide, the colony of Purple Herons was really busy, with birds continually arriving and leaving. Next was coffee time, after which we headed to a different location, where we were lucky to get fabulous views of Penduline Tit; all in all, it had been a great morning's birding.

Following lunch, and following the ethos of 'Go Slow', having enjoyed a little easy leisure time, we headed back down the A5/E90 to Trujillo, where the group had some time to explore this wonderful historic town, after which we went back to the hotel for a rest and to prepare for supper.

Day 4

Saturday 17th May

Santa Marta de Magasca & vulture hide at Santiago del Campo

Today was billed as our longest day away from the hotel, and we started with an early breakfast because we wanted to be on the plains of Santa Marta de Magasca as early as possible. Calling in at Trujillo for some fresh bread, we had the chance to look at the Lesser Kestrel colony, which is always an interesting stop. On the plains, and after only a few minutes, we spotted a Great Bustard in full display; it was fabulous, and there were three in the same general area. A Spanish Imperial Eagle perched at the top of a tree for pretty much the whole time that we were in the area.

Moving on a couple of kilometres, we saw some Pin-tailed Sandgrouse in flight, calling. Little Bustard had been proving a little difficult, especially with the long grass which had grown after the wet winter and spring. We moved to another location where they had been seen recently, and almost straight away we heard one calling. It came almost immediately into view: wonderful. Then we heard another calling from a different direction. What a great morning.

With pretty much all of the steppe birds seen, we called in at a café for a quick coffee, before heading to the vulture hide. On the way there we saw Little Owl and European Roller, which made a great bonus. The hide was, as always, a great success, with everyone thoroughly enjoying the experience of the kites, and both Cinereous and Griffon Vultures taking part in the feeding frenzy at close quarters. While the spectacle was unfolding, we prepared the picnic, after which we took the Monroy road and stopped along the way to view some great sites. We then headed back to the hotel after another fulfilling day.

Day 5

Sunday 18th May

Medellín & Alange

After breakfast today, we set off down the motorway towards Medellín. After yesterday's epic day, today was to be more relaxing, and at just after 10.00am we arrived at this historic town. The birthplace of Hernán Cortés, it has strong links with the conquistadores who left Spain for the Americas.

We walked up onto the fabulous bridge that crosses the River Guadiana, to the sound of Great Reed Warbler, with Golden Orioles singing from the eucalyptuses just upriver. Within the first fifteen minutes, we had seen at least four Little Bitterns and three Western Swamphens, while Penduline Tits could be heard calling from the vegetation. Viewing from the top of the bridge, we saw Pallid and Common Swifts flying below us, which gave us a good opportunity to study the differences between these very similar species.

After the bridge, the café just down the road provided us a good coffee stop, after which we walked along the river for a while, just listening to the Nightingales, Cetti's Warblers, and Golden Orioles, which on a few occasions were seen as yellow flashes flying from one side of the river to the other. Purple Herons were regularly flying up and down. It was picnic time again, and there can be very few sites for a picnic as spectacular as by the bridge at Medellín. So, while we prepared this smorgasbord of a picnic, the group had the opportunity to see the castle and Roman theatre. The picnic down by the river truly was a great experience, especially with the wonderful weather.

Next, we headed down to Alange. As soon as we were out of the vans, Alpine Swifts were flying over, calling as they went; this bird really is impressive when seen at such close quarters. A little further around the path, a Blue Rock Thrush showed, and after a little searching, not one but two Black Wheatears were seen on the face of this amazing rock formation.

The mid-afternoon temperature was getting a little on the warm side, so we went back to the hotel for the group to have a dip in the pool, or just to chill out, before another fabulous meal from Iva & Sara at Finca Flores Amarillas.

Day 6

Monday 19th May

Monfragüe National Park

It is always a highlight to visit Monfragüe National Park, and today that was where we were headed. After a slightly earlier than normal breakfast, we reached Trujillo by 9.00am, where we stocked up with fresh bread and provisions for today's lunch. The drive up through the *dehesa* north of Trujillo was spectacular, with carpets of wild flowers as far as the eye could see.

Our first stop was the Castillo de Monfragüe, and we took the route around behind the castle, which has fabulous views of the surrounding countryside. The first birds of note were two Hawfinches, then further around, two Rock Buntings showed really well. Working our way up, there were quite a few Wall Brown butterflies sunning themselves. On reaching the viewing platform, the vultures from Salto de Gitano could be seen below us: a remarkable sight. We went up to the top viewing area where we hoped to see White-rumped Swift, but it is not an easy bird at all. After about ten minutes, one of the group shouted 'swift!' and sure enough, two White-rumped Swifts were gliding by at head height: perfect.

Following this, we arrived at Villarreal de San Carlos for a coffee stop, before heading to another site where we saw an adult Bonelli's Eagle. It was almost lunchtime, which we were to have at La Tajadilla, but on the way we stopped to view a fabulous Western Black-eared Wheatear. At the picnic site there were many vultures, of which the best were two Egyptian Vultures, while a Short-toed Snake Eagle flew over. At our next stop, we viewed the Portilla del Tiétar, before heading back towards Villarreal. The day was passing us by, but we were left with only

Salto de Gitano to visit, an iconic place, and it certainly did not disappoint us. Among all the vultures, this site is good for viewing Black Stork, which are wonderful, elegant birds, and superb in flight. The resident Peregrine Falcons were feeding young, and we got good telescope views of the nest and an attendant adult.

We had had such a great day in Monfragüe: it was time to head back to the hotel for another great home-cooked meal.

Day 7

Tuesday 20th May

Finca Flores Amarillas, Campo Lugar & Alcollarín

An optional early start was the order of the day, with a late breakfast and an early six-kilometre walk on offer. Those who chose the walk enjoyed the early morning sights and sounds of this wonderful natural environment, and returned refreshed and ready for some of Sara's homemade tortilla!

Having had this later breakfast, we did not leave the hotel until 10.30am, but this was not a problem, because after doing incredibly well with our bird sightings earlier in the week, we could relax and enjoy the local area. Heading to Campo Lugar again, we had the larks and other steppe birds, but revisiting the Rollers was a real treat. Next, we had a coffee stop before going to the Embalse de Alcollarín; for any naturalist, the wealth of flora and fauna here is not to be missed. Nightingales and a Great Reed Warbler sang to us while we ate our last picnic of the holiday. The dragonflies were also out in good numbers, and we got to see Violet Dropwing, Scarlet Darter, Lesser Emperor, and numerous Blue Damselflies, while butterflies included Southern Brown Argus, Painted Lady, Western Dappled White, Southern Gatekeeper, and Small White.

Heading back to the hotel from the last outing of the week, we were in good time to enjoy the pool and surrounding area before 'La Última Cena' (the last supper), and bed.

Day 8

Wednesday 21st May

Transfer day Almoharín – Seville SVQ

Leaving the hotel at 10.00am, we had time to say our goodbyes to Iva, Paul & Sara at the hotel before heading south. We stopped on the way for coffee and a sandwich lunch, before the drop-off at the airport, on a beautiful sunny Andalusian afternoon.



Iberian Magpie

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>							✓
Egyptian Goose - I	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>							✓
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>							✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>		H		H			
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>				✓	H	✓	H
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>			✓		✓		
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>			✓		✓		
White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>					✓		
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>				✓			
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>				✓			
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>						✓	
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		H	H	H			
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>				✓			
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>		✓					
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>						✓	
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		H				✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>			✓				
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓
Western Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>			✓		✓		
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓					✓
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>							✓
Eurasian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedecnemus</i>				✓			
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>				✓			✓
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>		✓					
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>			✓				✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>							✓
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>						✓	
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>					✓		
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		✓					
Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>			✓		✓		
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓						
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>			✓				✓
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>		✓					
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>						✓	

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>			✓	✓		✓	
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓
Spanish Imperial Eagle - N	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>				✓		✓	
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>						✓	
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	✓			
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>				✓			
Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>							H
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>		✓		✓			✓
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓		✓		✓
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>						✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>						✓	
Monk Parakeet - I	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>							✓
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>		✓			✓	✓	
Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>						✓	
Iberian Magpie - N	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>						✓	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓		H	✓	✓
Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>			✓	✓	H		
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				✓		✓	✓
Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>			✓			✓	✓
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>		✓		✓			✓
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>		✓		✓			✓
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis rufula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		H	✓	✓	✓		H
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>		H	H		H		✓
Common Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>			✓		H		
Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>		✓				✓	✓
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>			✓				
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓				H	✓
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Western Subalpine Warbler	<i>Curruca iberiae</i>						H	
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>						✓	
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>						✓	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				H		✓	
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>		H	H	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>			✓	✓		✓	
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>		✓			✓	✓	
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>						✓	
Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>					✓		
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>		✓					
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>					✓		
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>		✓				✓	✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Waxbill - I	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>		✓			✓		
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		✓					
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>			✓	✓			✓
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>		✓		✓			
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>						✓	✓
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>						✓	✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>						✓	

Mammals

		May 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>					✓		
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>							✓
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>					✓		

Reptiles and amphibians

N=near-endemic, I=introduced		May 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Ocellated Lizard	<i>Lacerta lepida</i>				✓			
Spanish Pond Turtle	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>						✓	
Red-eared Slider - I	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>					✓		
Horseshoe Whip-snake	<i>Hemorrhois hippocrepis</i>					✓		
Iberian Water Frog - N	<i>Rana iberica</i>						✓	✓

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name	May 2025						
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Brimstone	<i>Gonopteryx rhamni</i>						✓	
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>					✓	✓	✓
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>					✓		✓
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>					✓		
Western Dappled White	<i>Euchloe crameri</i>					✓		✓
Ilex Hairstreak	<i>Satyrrium ilicis</i>						✓	
Southern Brown Argus	<i>Aricia crameri</i>							✓
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓
Mediterranean Skipper	<i>Gegenes nostrodamus</i>					✓		
Southern Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia cecelia</i>				✓		✓	✓
Wall Brown	<i>Lassiomata megera</i>						✓	

Damselflies and dragonflies

Common name	Scientific name	May 2025						
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Blue Damselfly sp.	<i>Ischnura</i> sp.							✓
Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>							✓
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>							✓
Scarlet Darter	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>							✓
Violet Dropwing	<i>Trithemis annulata</i>							✓

Other invertebrates

Common name	Scientific name	May 2025						
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Lesser Water Boatman	<i>Corixa punctata</i>							✓
Harvestmen	<i>Opiliones</i> sp.						✓	